

Fostering Effective Instruction



Perry Township Schools: William Henry Burkhart Elementary School



WE ARE William Henry Burkhart Elementary School, located on the south side of Indianapolis. Our school serves 647 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade.

OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES come from a variety of backgrounds and diverse homes. Over 43% of our students are English Language Learners and represent a variety of cultures. Over 71% of our students qualify for free or reduced meals.

OUR TEACHERS are awesome! They have effectively transitioned to working with a large English Learner population, many of whom are refugee students entering formal schooling for the first time. Teachers participate in weekly professional development sessions to hone their skills and continuously seek ways to improve their teaching practices for the good of students.

OUR PROMISING PRACTICE Grade level teams share a common planning period and divide the responsibility of lesson plan preparation for subjects and units of study. This sharing of plans allows for all students in a grade level to be exposed to the same curriculum and content through similar instructional delivery and timing. When walking about the building, it is common to see the same lesson in each classroom of a grade level. From hook, to instructional content, to application, all students are experiencing the same lesson. This leads to a standardization of the curriculum and shared learning experiences at each grade level, equating to a successful learning environment for students.

OUR STEPS to success have involved the empowerment of teachers and the encouragement of "working smarter, not harder." The springboard to this collaborative approach to shared planning was a training session on Google Drive and Google Docs. For example, one teacher in the grade level takes the lead on planning a subject or unit of study. As the plans are shared with other teachers on the grade level team, they are able to add ideas, create graphic organizers, find lesson hooks...making lesson plans better than they would have been if just one teacher had created them (five heads are better than one!). As teaching teams grow and change, this method of planning seems to provide new teachers with a solid foundation from which to begin their own understanding of grade level standards and best practices.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR TEACHERS

"Having five ideas is better than having one idea. We can toss around ideas and come up with the best one for our students." - Joann Ahmay, 1st grade teacher

"We keep our lesson plans from year to year. Being able to refine units and lesson plans saves time and allows us to continually improve our instruction." - Matt White, 4th grade teacher

For more information about our school or corporation, email: jhappersberger@perryschools.org
or visit our website: <http://websites.msdpt.k12.in.us/hb/>.